



THE IRON WAY

A TALE OF THE BUILDERS OF THE WEST.

BY SARAH PRATT CLARK

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CHAPTER I. Arrow and Fire.

Half a century ago the great region between the Missouri and the Sierra Nevadas, except for Denver, Salt Lake City, and a few mining camps, was a trackless, forestless desolation known only to Indian, coyote, and venture-some emigrant. Yet two men under the golden wing of the government planted a line of lonely posts, and linked them with a chain of stage coaches. Over this treacherous way sped daily messages, men and treasure; sped, and arrived—if frost and Indians permitted.

Late on an autumn afternoon the Overland Mail was tolling upward up a western rampart of the Rocky mountains. Two passengers were on the box with the driver. The center man, booked as Alfred Vincent, was slight, fair, and, to the superficial eye, young to boyishness. His air of one bred to the best of city refinements contrasted sharply with his fellow-traveler, who had been introduced as Mr. Phineas Cadwallader, though the driver afterwards called him "Blow-hard Cad," which nickname he vindicated by a constant stream of gossip. But an astute observer would have seen that he was trying to penetrate the reserve, the slight mystery that surrounded his fellow-traveler.

Yet whatever the mystery, Alfred Vincent was now posting westward with a letter in his pocket signed by Collins P. Huntington, and directed to Leland Stanford, governor of California, and president of the Central Pacific Railroad company. Alfred paid slight heed to the others. His impatient imagination winged him far from present inaction, over mountain and desert, to the far west, to unguessed conflicts of the future.

"Holy Mackinaw! Only fools would think of building a railroad through this God-forsaken country!"

The caustic sentence roused Alfred from his reverie; and Phineas noted that "railroad" was the magic word that broke the spell. The driver, William Dodge, better known as "Uncle Billy," readjusted his quid of comfort, spat with precision, and touched up a lagging leader with the tip of his rod-long whiplash. "Well, I'm not taking the chances of calling Gove's Stanford a fool."

"Of course he ain't. He don't intend to build any railroad, either. Not over the Sierras, anyway. He's got a better thing." Phineas' sideways look diligently sought a rift in Alfred's mask.

"Meaning?" Uncle Billy questioned.

"That Dutch Flat Swindle. Those C. P. fellows have their wagon road built over the Sierras, and—"

"How in blazes can they build a railroad, Cad, without a wagon road? Don't they have to feed their advance construction camps? And won't they have to do it for years, while they cut their miles of tunnels?"

"Oh, they'll put their railroad through to Dutch Flat maybe; but from there on they'll go it by mules; take all the toll they can get from the \$12,000,000 freightage Nevada pays every year to the transportation companies. The C. P. people want a bite of Louis McLane's pie, that's all."

"They're going to get it, you bet!" The driver smiled; yet his low, leisurely words seemed a flat.

"Not by a jugful!" Phineas lifted his voice and pounded the air; and Alfred detected the sham note, the bid for effect. "What do you suppose we are doing along the line? Why, San Francisco merchants can sit in their offices and sell to all California, to Nevada, Idaho and southern Oregon, at any price they choose to name. And McLane and all the other transportation folks can haul the goods at their own figures; they won't even let the towns have post offices because they like to carry letters at half a dollar apiece. San Francisco bay's full of ships, and the mountains are full of gold; and we're getting it going both ways, out and in."

"Yes, you're taking too much," the driver replied. "You're killing your gold-egg goose."

Phineas' smile was unpleasant. "Oh, no! She's hearty yet. And we won't divvy up the eggs, either, with those seven-by-nine shopkeepers in that hole they call Sacramento. Do you suppose we'll let them make a fishing-pond of the bay, and a winter watering-place of San Francisco? Not on your gold toothpick!"

Uncle Billy's eye flashed its first hint of resentment. "Stanford's worst enemy wouldn't think of calling him seven-by-nine; and I reckon California voters'll have something to say. Leland's got right smart influence with them."

"Yes, they voted both state and city bonds, didn't they, Mr. Dodge?" Vincent asked, joining the conversation at last.

"Oh, call me Uncle Billy," said the driver. "It's so long since anyone called me Dodge, I need an introduction to the name."

"You bet Stanford's got influence with the voters," Phineas broke in before Uncle Billy came to Vincent's question. "But San Francisco brains and dollars can beat voters any time. Did any of our citizens subscribe for

stock? The rabble voted bonds for us, but have the supervisors issued them yet? You bet not!"

"I should think Gov. Stanford could compel the law's with him, isn't it?" Alfred asked, with a languid air that well concealed his interest.

"Compel? Compel nothing! The law's slower'n molasses at the north pole."

"Anyway," Phineas persisted noisily, "if anybody's going to build a railroad it'll be McLane and San Francisco. By Hookey! If anybody milks this government cow you bet it'll be us!"

"Well, we need the railroad," Uncle Billy said positively.

"Need it? What for? Does the east care about us? Not a pin, except for our gold. If they get a railroad they'll demand more of us; and if we don't pony up, they'll ship troops over our own road to whip us in. No, shree! We'll be a Pacific republic yet, California and the other coast states. And the renegades, red and white, here in this country that's the back door to

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—created the imagination with their mysterious semblances to man's structures. Alfred Vincent thrilled to each of these weird voices from the wilderness.

Yet homesickness gripped him as the rhythmic hoof-beats put him added miles from the home he still longed for. He thought of his sorrow-stricken mother, her love unvanquished by any deed of his; of her teaching; of the still more potent example of her pure life—these memories saddened, yet softened him; blended his eager vision of the approaching west with the benediction of the spired temple. And for a space his heart was attuned to prayer and psalm.

Uncle Billy broke the long silence. "Not yet, my boys," he said affectionately to his team.

They had left the black alkaline water behind, had climbed higher, where a thin film of more innocent-looking water was spread on the drab earth before them. The November sun was summer-strong, the dust intolerable; and the mules coaxed dumbly for water.

"Not yet, boys," Uncle Billy repeated. "Isn't it safe?"

"Yes, safe, perhaps, but this is the sink of the stream; the creek watch's a heap betcher a mile further on."

The mile was semi-perpendicular, and brought them alongside a brawling stream, willow-hung, with splashing trout in the still pools, and wild ducks skimming a large pond at the edge of a small mesa. After welcome draughts for man and mule they veered away to another climb. The gorgeous evening pageant was nearly over when the team swung around a sharp rocky point, and one of the leaders shied far out of the road. The

small hands. Alfred's back was turned, yet he could feel—see—those—the gruesome spectacle behind. What could be done? How should they be disposed of?—but there was no time for question.

"Can you beah a hand hyah, Vincent, and quick?"

He turned. The driver had already lifted the shoulders of one; Alfred took the feet.

"Right fo'ward hyah, round the point."

"You—you aren't going to—to leave—"

"Yes, we'll have to, if we don't want to look the same way mighty soon!"

"Can't we put them in the stage? It's awful to leave them!"

"It may be worse to take them; and I'm afraid we'll need the stage for the living if—we get through."

Alfred said no more; and Uncle Billy warmed to him as he saw the clear-cut jaw set and a steely light creep into the dark violet eyes.

"He's game!" Uncle Billy whispered to himself.

Gently they disposed of the poor, mutilated bodies, and hurried back to the stage. The driver armed each passenger with a rifle and revolver; and ordering Alfred beside him, and Phineas to keep the lookout from the top, he swung his team into the road and drove forward through the cut with slash and oath.

Dark was stealing on, yet the sun's good-night glory still lingered, its flaming banners striking into the overhead darkness, flooding earth and heavens with strange, sinister color. Alfred thought of what lay behind, and gripped his gun sharply. The team slowed, and Uncle Billy no longer piled the lash.

"See that light there, away yon to the left?"

"Yes."

"That's Anthony's, the next station. Some one's alive there, and that some one is white, or there wouldn't be a candle light; the whole place would be alight."

Relief unspeakable breathed in his words, and a half mile passed in silence.

"This is a terrible way to earn a living!" Alfred said at last.

"Yes; but this job's easy compared to the trick the pony express boys used to play."

"This is dangerous enough. I wonder the company can induce men to undertake the work. Don't you find it wearing?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose it is. It's right smart skeery sometimes, 'specially at night when I make the trip alone. And I wonder passengers don't buck against being sent across without escort, like now."

"They would if they knew what they'd see. But it's infinitely worse for you drivers."

"Well, I reckon the Lord knows his business, an' mine, too. I figger all I got to do is to see he don't catch me asleep on the box."

A sudden admiration for this hero of the desert warmed Alfred's heart.

"This time I'd hated to let them bacon-colored critters get me before I got to Anthony's. Those tracks are all from Anthony's; and there's more than men and property—there's Anthony's little gal, and—"

Alfred shivered at the significant pause.

"Anthony's had hard luck. He's one of God's best, if he is set up a mite queer."

"Does he live alone? Oh, no; I suppose he has a helper as they have at other stations, hasn't he?" Alfred hoped the driver would tell him more of the station agent, not because of his own interest in the agent, but that he might be saved from thinking.

"Yes, he has a helper, Gid Ingram; but he's only a boy, if he is big. And Stella, pore little chicken! She—"

Alfred waited discreetly.

"Away back in the fifties Anthony struck it rich over Washoe way," Uncle Billy began again in a steadier tone. "Struck it powerful rich; panned out money fasten he could count it. And what did he do but put up the durndest biggest palace this side of Frisco—put it up right there where he struck tin. It was a bang-up place fo' sho'; big rooms with flower gardens on the walls; gold chairs, and looking glasses till you'd see yo'self so many times you'd think you'd got 'em again."

"That there house," he continued presently, "stood in a little artificial-looking garden, just as sassy as a jay-bird, setting there on the bare flank of the Sleery Nevadys. But the whole blamed outfit looked awful lonesome in spite of bein' so grand and handsome. It seemed durned out of place, like a peafowl in full spread on a snowbank."

"Didn't Mr. Anthony have a family?" Alfred questioned.

"Yes, one little gal; that was all. When he got those domestic cyards dealt out to suit him, he sent back east somewhere for her. She was a peart little slip 'bout nine yeas old—come oveh from Sacramento in my stage. I used to drive in God's country those days."

"Anthony put her in as mistress of the mansion; an' there she'd sit in her high-back chair at the head of the table as big as life, the only bit of crinolone present when he'd give grand dinners to the Washoe quality. The men would toast her, and she'd stan' up and bow, solemn as a funeral."

"What? No woman at all around her?"

"Oh, he had an old woman to look after her a mite, comb and mend, and such; a good old critter, but no thoroughbred. And except for her the little one nevah saw any but men."

"How did she learn anything?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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FLY TO SUBTERFUGE

ALREADY REPUBLICANS PLAN TO DEFEAT WILL OF PEOPLE.

Dalzell's Recent Statement May Be Accepted as the Voice of the Party—Standpatters Firm in the Saddle.

The ingenious John Dalzell, member of the ways and means committee, congressman from the Pennsylvania steel districts and amiable standpatter, has expressed an opinion as to tariff revision which is worth considering in view of his close association with the clique that controls in the house. It is Mr. Dalzell's view that the revision desired by congress will concern itself chiefly with reconciling the law on the books with the decisions of the treasury department on obscure sections. The law, he declared, should be so amended that there will be no doubt of its construction.

Of course, this is the frankest subterfuge. No tariff law was ever devised or conceived that could meet the intricate and changing conditions of a tremendous commerce without calling for the construction of some of its schedules and classifications by judicial organizations empowered to make authoritative interpretations. Every change is followed as a matter of course by an amount of litigation that decreases steadily from the time the law goes into effect. Any effort to reconcile the law with the decisions of treasury department and general appraisers and courts will amount to nothing at all or open the way for new litigation.

But Mr. Dalzell went farther and said emphatically that no revision would meet the approval of the new congress if it tended in the least to disturb the prosperity wave that he believed Mr. Taft's election had already started. "Even the Democrats," he declared, "would not go in for any law that would affect the interests of their section of the country." As proof of this contention he said there was a Democrat in the house who had a bill pending putting cotton on the protected list.

The views of Mr. John Dalzell would be idle if they were to be considered on their merits. But he is a conspicuous figure in a select assembly that will control absolutely this important legislation in the house. What he thinks is not important because it is right or wrong, or sound or logical or informative, but because what he thinks indicates what enough of the Republicans in the house will think—when they have been subjected to direction—to indicate the policy of the body and the kind of a tariff bill that will be prepared.

The matter is the more interesting when read in connection with certain items of news. For instance, recently there appeared before the ways and means committee a representative of the manufacturers of fertilizers. He asked that the rate on the ingredients of fertilizers be increased by changing the ad valorem rates to specific. He admitted that the articles he spoke for were already manufactured profitably in this country and that additional duties would merely serve the purpose of increasing the profits. A few days later came a preliminary announcement of the organization of a fertilizer trust.

Nothing has been done, it is true, but the two items cannot be divorced and, whatever happens, it is plain that the farmers will have to pay more for fertilizers if the trust is formed, still more if the duty is increased, with the hope of lower prices and fairer prices dependent on a reduction of the duties.—St. Louis Republic.

Use of Money in Recent Election.

To the extent that money counts in elections, it is interesting to note that the Republican national committee had this year \$1,500,000 for campaign expenses, while the Democratic fund was hardly one-third as much. And since the Democratic national committee had about as much as could be legitimately used in the dissemination of Democratic doctrine, the question remains, What did the Republican national committee do with the extra million? And the Republican congressional committee has not yet been heard from.

Business, Not Politics.

The people who were for immediate tariff revision before election are now for putting it off, on the plea that what is wanted is deliberate revision—not hasty changes in a few schedules. There will be shifting attitudes due to tactics. Tariff revision involves no political principle, but as a matter of practical business, and as such must be conducted fairly to all the interests concerned, or there will be legitimate cause for complaint.—Milwaukee Wisconsin.

Heavy Taxes Paid by West.

Eastern tariff barons talk grandiloquently of "protection" to American labor and American struggling industries. Under this cloak they make western producers and consumers pay a tax on practically everything they produce and consume. They make the western farmer pay exorbitantly for his implements and the western home-builder exorbitantly for his materials.

A Wisconsin judge says seaweed is a valuable food product, and the nation should learn to eat it. The judge should not anticipate another siege of Republican "prosperity." Instead of worrying over what will happen under another Republican government, let us give the Republicans a long vacation. They need one.

WHAT WOULD HE HAVE SAID?



"Get up, Jack. You mustn't cry like a baby! You're quite a man now. You know if I fell down I shouldn't cry, I should merely say—"

"Yes, I know, pa; but then—I go to Sunday school—and you don't."

The Changing Times.